

AWARD INTERVENTION REPORT ON A FIVE-WEEK STUDY IN PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY

December 2009 – March 2010

Project Research and Training

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Introduction

AWARD Reading is a K-3 literacy program that fully integrates technology and print to accelerate reading achievement for all students. The program consists of over 300 narrative and informational texts. The traditional print component is matched with the same texts in digital format and over 800 interactive skills activities delivered on the internet. The program also has phonics components—alphabet (K), letter combinations (Grade 1), and word families (Grade 1).

Students show a high-level of interest when technology is partnered with print. This transfers into their instructional experiences whether in small groups or as an independent literacy activity. Literacy development needs a sound framework and AWARD provides this with scaffolded skills instruction.

A recent year-long research study conducted by Dr. Cathy Collins Block and Dr. John N. Mangieri in New York City schools found that students using AWARD produced positive results whether they were ELLs or Title I students, and whether the program was used as an after-school, push-in, pull-out, or self contained model. (See the full report in the Appendix)

Proposal

Prince George County reviewed the New York City research report and sought to use AWARD as an intervention package containing technology and print to look for evidence of the program's success in Prince George County. However, unlike New York, the timeline was only five weeks.

Gayle Vance, Special Education Coordinator, Prince George County, met with AWARD Reading representatives and agreed to a proposal to conduct a five-week study of a 30-minute intervention program outside of the literacy block, which uses the basal Scott Foresman by using AWARD Reading on a daily basis as a pull-out for special education students.

Gayle Vance invited schools with low-achieving students who had already purchased AWARD to participate in the study, and from the respondents, two were selected that could guarantee more than three computers per classroom for the intervention students to work on daily.

The principals of the two selected schools chose one class at each combined grade level from kindergarten through to grade three to take part in the study. This totaled 5 classes altogether. (Three K-1 classes, and two Grade 2-3 classes.)

The teachers selected their lowest Special Education Tier II and Tier III students to receive the AWARD Reading instruction for the 25 days of the study. This totaled 29 students.

Richard Allington believes the smaller the group, the more likely the intervention will succeed (*What Really Matters in Response to Intervention*, Allyn & Bacon. 2009).

...we find a near unanimous agreement that very small instructional groups or tutorials are needed (Allington, 2006; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Foorman & Torgeson, 2001; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; McEneaney, Lose, & Schwartz, 2006).

December 2009	2	Teacher training
January 2010	12	Pre-tests
January 2010	11–31	Study (vacation dates are included)
February 2010	1–28	Study
March 2010	1–5	Study
	8	Post-tests
	23	Report due

Procedures

Approval to conduct the research investigation was given by Gayle Vance. Following this approval, the school in the study was identified and an explanation of the AWARD program was provided to the school administrators and teachers.

Gayle Vance, worked closely with the AWARD consultant (Maureen Lawson) to schedule the training, testing and logistics of implementing the program in the five selected classes.

AWARD Reading is a comprehensive, balanced literacy curriculum program that partners print and technology to deliver literacy outcomes to 21st-century students. Students use technology with text in the program every day. The following components are part of the daily instruction.

- Sequential learning
- Phonics instruction
- Explicit instruction
- Differentiation options
- Tools to provide feedback to parents and students
- Computer-assisted skills-based assessment
- Instruction based on research

Adjustment of levels for Intervention

Kindergarten and Grade 1 worked on Magenta through to Yellow levels.

Grade 2 and 3 worked on Red through to Gold levels.

See the correlation chart (in the Appendix).

Training

The teachers involved in the study met for a two-three hour professional development with the AWARD consultant.

Training Plan

Overview of AWARD

Participants learn how to recognize and use the components of the program, a hands-on experience

Model the AWARD Program

AWARD consultants support teachers with an understanding of the AWARD Program for intervention

Implementation

Participants learn to integrate technology daily into the AWARD Program to enhance small group instruction

Management plans will be shared to support a rotation of computer access for students.

Debriefing

Participants have the opportunity to clarify and share ideas.

The On-line sample is shared during this presentation. Teachers are asked to ensure students in the study have computer access using AWARD for at least 15 minutes per day out of the 30 minutes allocated for intervention.

Follow-up Visit

The AWARD consultant facilitated a walk-through visit midway through the five-week study to answer any questions. She found the teachers were committed to supporting students and they reported that students were engaged and enjoyed working on AWARD daily. The computers were effectively running the program and teachers had access to the number of computers they needed so that intervention students could use AWARD for at least 15 minutes each day. The teachers had been successful at integrating technology with group reading. They were focused on meeting the needs of their students.

A research-based design

The model for the small group intervention was a daily 30-minute design, based on one in Richard Allington's *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention*.

- 20 minutes of reading appropriate new texts and rereading previously read texts
- 5 minutes of word work or phonological skills work
- 5 minutes of work on comprehension skills and strategies (p. 67)

Student Timetable

Daily model (30–40 minutes allocated)

5–10 minutes	Shared Reading – Genre Piece
5–10 minutes	Small Group Instruction Group Reading of text and modeling activities online
15 minutes	Independent Learning Independent time on computers to practice reading and skills activities

Allington states,

What will be absolutely critical is that in this redesign we must ensure that reading volume is dramatically increased if accelerated reading growth is the intended outcome. (p. 69)

In the AWARD model (see above), the small group instruction and independent learning provide a total of 20 minutes of reading appropriate new texts and rereading previously read texts in print and on the computers.

Administration of the Tests

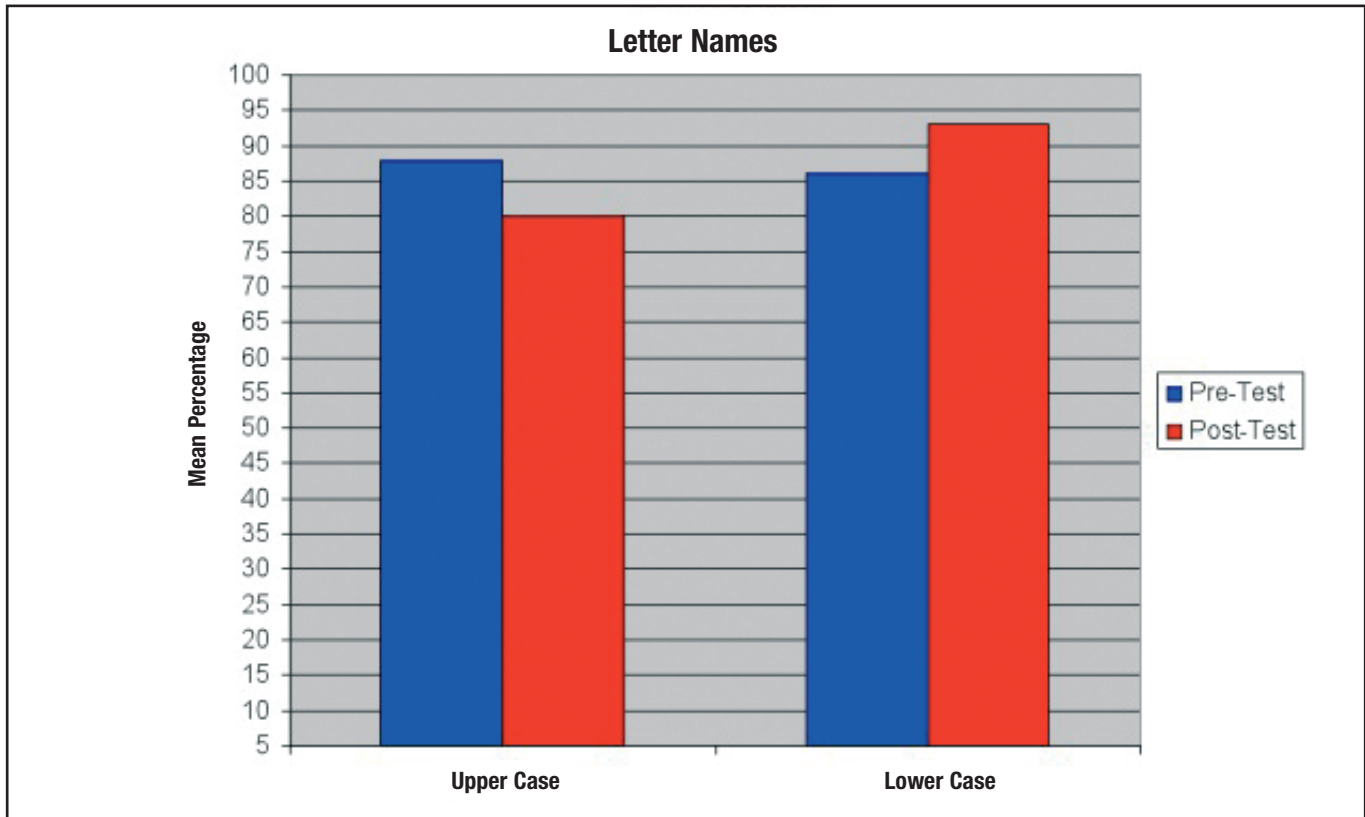
The study was for five weeks of instruction, with one week allocated for pre-testing and one week for post-testing as requested by the Prince George County Department of Education.

Two consultants were trained by AWARD in testing procedure (see appendix for pre-test booklet). The tests were selected from the AWARD formative assessment computer program to match DRA levels of students (supplied by teachers). This software was loaded onto the computers. All testing was done on the computer and the results were saved to a database where they could be printed out as raw results or as a bar graph. (see Appendix for a sample printout).

The testing personnel followed a timetable drawn up by Gayle Vance to ensure each student completed the tests on the computer. Each test took approximately 15 minutes.

Pre-test and post-test results were printed and delivered by the testing personnel to an independent evaluator for analysis and a final report.

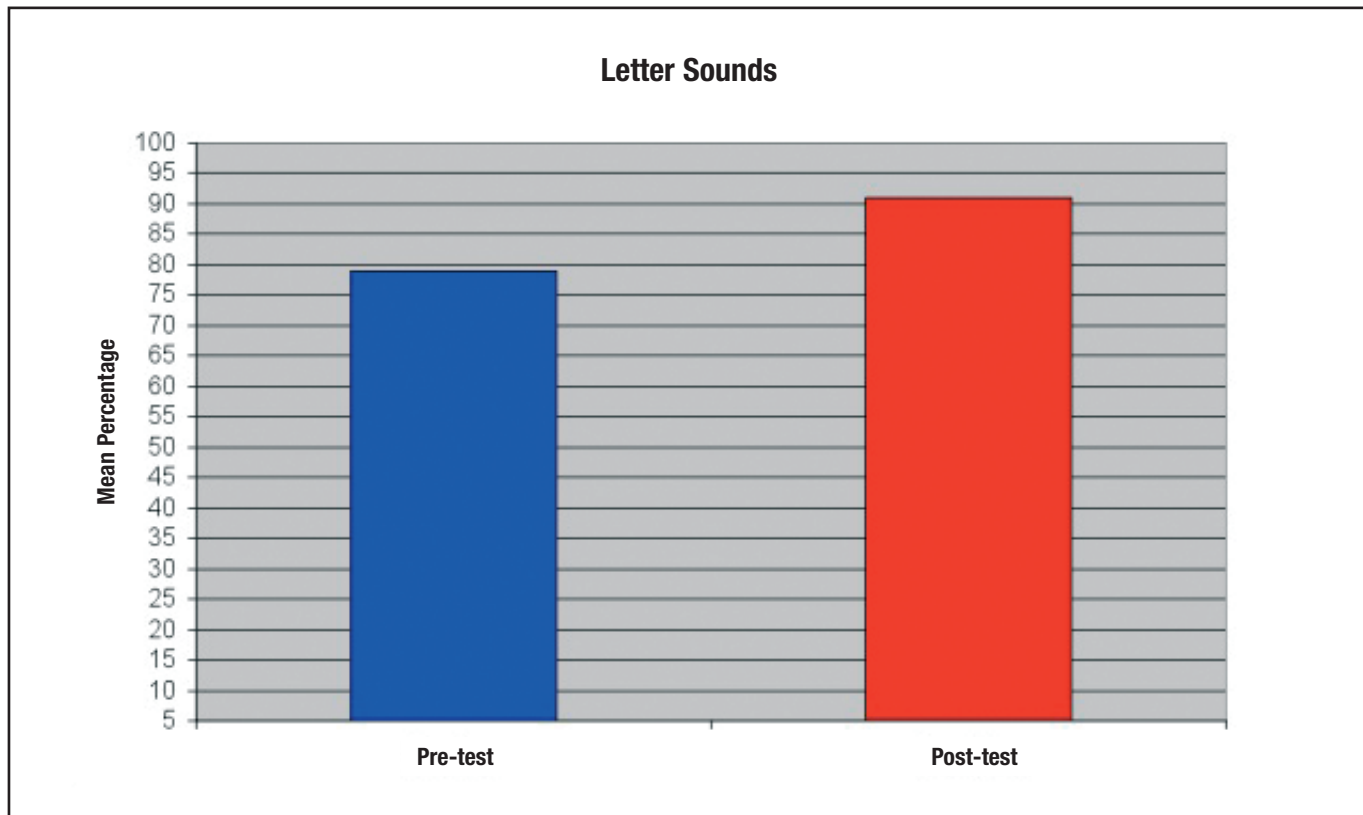
Results



The majority of students reading at Magenta and Red levels were tested for uppercase and lowercase letter names. Most students who gained 100% in the pre-test were not post-tested. However, five students who scored 100% in their pre-test were post-tested and retained their score of 100%. The graphs do not include those students who scored 100% on the pre-test.

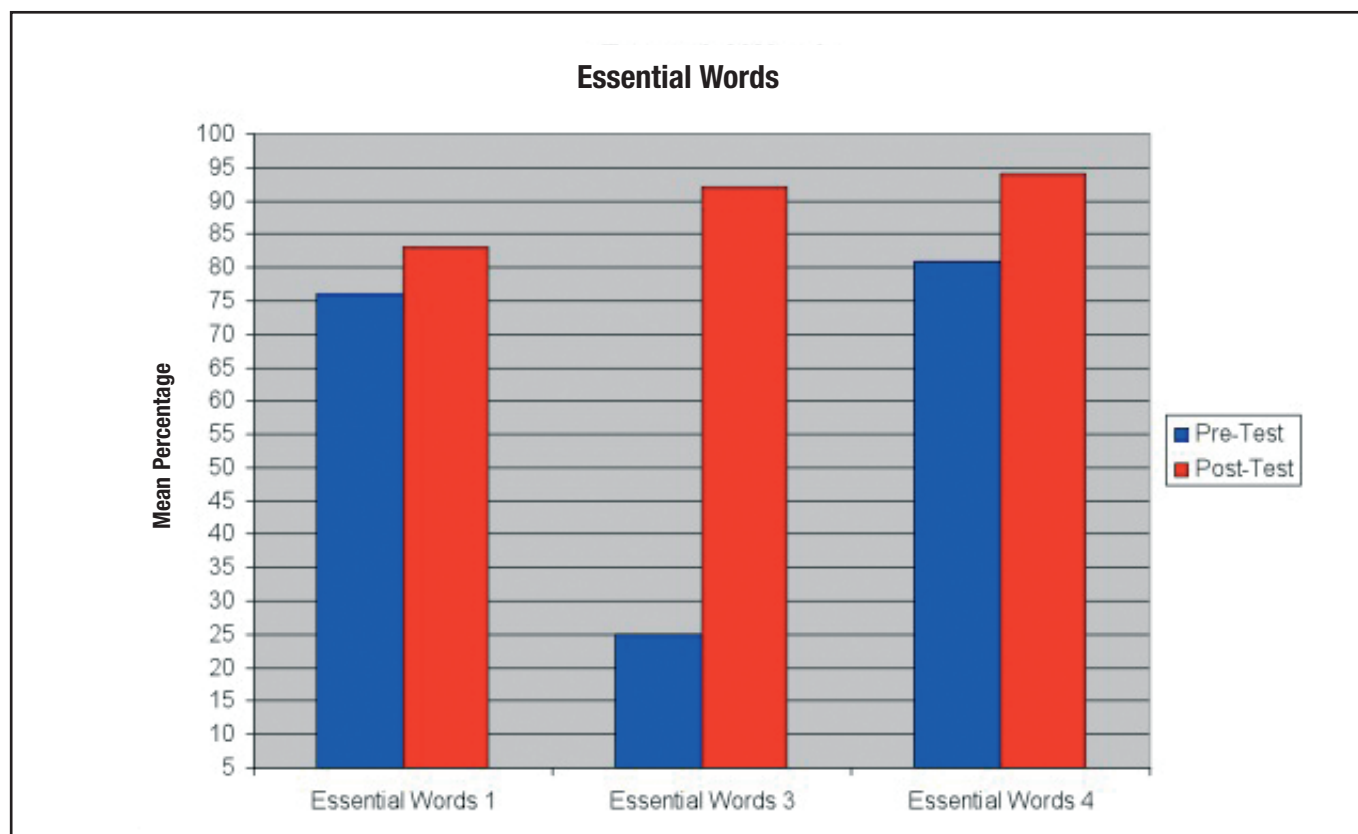
Seven students were pre- and post-tested for uppercase letters. Four of these students improved their scores by between 4% and 15%. Two students however scored less in their post-test by between 4% and 54%.

Eight students were pre- and post- tested for lowercase letter names. Seven of these students showed an improvement of between 4% and 20%.



Students reading at Yellow level were tested for letter sound knowledge. Students who scored 100% in the pre-test were not post-tested. This graph shows only the results of the five students who were pre- and post-tested.

Three of the students improved their score, with two gaining 100% in the post-test. The third student made a significant increase of 62%. Two students scored slightly less in their post-test (between 4% and 10%).

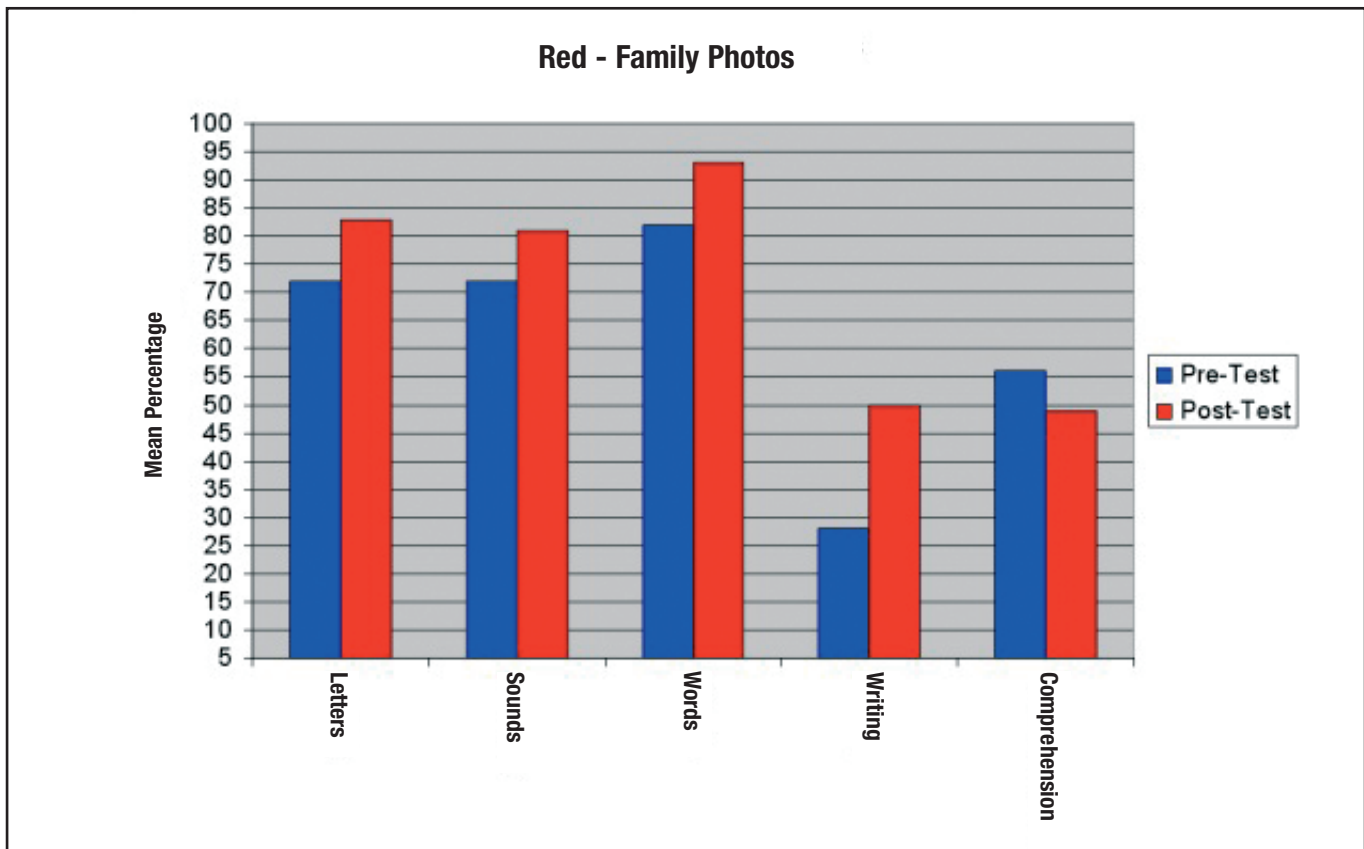


Students who scored 100% in the pre-test were not post-tested or included in these results.

Eleven students were pre-tested for Essential Words 1. Two students scored 100%. Nine students were post-tested. Seven of these students improved or retained their score by between 10% and 25%.

Six students were pre-tested for Essential Words 3. Five of these students scored 100%. The sixth student made a significant improvement of 67% in the post-test.

Seven students were pre-tested for Essential Words 4. Three scored 100%. The four students who were post-tested improved their score by between 8% and 25%.



Nine students were pre- and post-tested at Red level.

All students improved or retained their score for letters, with two students showing an improvement of 50%.

Six students improved or retained their score for sounds. One student made a significant shift of 75%.

Eight students improved or retained their score for words, with three of the students improving their score by 33%.

All students improved or retained their writing score, with one student making a significant shift from 0% - 75%.

One student made a positive improvement of 28% for comprehension. Four students retained their results. Four of the scores in comprehension showed a decrease of between 14% and 25%.

There were too few students in the following groups to represent a valid study.

Magenta - At the Zoo

Three students were pre- and post-tested for Magenta level. A fourth student was absent for the post-test.

One student improved their score for letters by 50%, one retained their score and the other student's score decreased. Two students lowered their score in the sounds assessment.

All students improved their score in words by 25%. They all retained their score of 50% in writing.

Two students improved their comprehension score by 15%.

Yellow - My Granny Rides a Bicycle

Three students were pre- and post-tested for Yellow level.

Two of the students increased their sounds score to 100% and the third student retained their pre-test score.

All students improved or retained their words score, and all students scored 100%.

Two students improved or retained their writing score.

Two students improved or retained their comprehension score, with one of the students making a significant shift of 60%.

Blue - The S Party

Only one student was pre- and post-tested at Blue.

This student made a positive shift in three areas (words, writing and comprehension) and retained their score for sounds.

Green - Where is the Cabbage?

Two students were pre- and post-tested at Green level.

One student made a shift of 25% in sounds.

There was a significant improvement in their scores for words. Both students improved by 50%.

One of the students made an improvement of 20% in their writing score. The other student retained their score from the pre-test.

Orange - It's Time You Had a Haircut

One student was pre- and post-tested at Orange level.

Comprehension and phonics score remained the same. There was a decrease in the vocabulary score. This student scored 0% in pre- and post-test for visual literacy.

Light Blue - Too Good to Waste

One student was pre- and post-tested for Light Blue level.

Comprehension score showed a decrease of 13% and the vocabulary score by 20%. The phonics result showed a positive improvement of 20%. This student scored 0% in the pre-test for visual literacy and made a positive shift of 50% in the post-test.

Gold - The Circle Shell

Two students were pre- and post-tested at Gold level.

One student made a positive improvement (between 15% and 40%) in their comprehension, vocabulary and phonics scores and retained their score for visual literacy. The other student scored less in the post-test in all areas.

Limitations

1. The study was undertaken by teachers who were new to AWARD and had only had 2 hours of professional development in the use of AWARD Reading..
2. The basal instruction used by the two schools had little or no technology. In contrast teachers found themselves using technology and print daily for this intervention, a new experience for many of them.
3. The students were all Tier II and Tier III.
4. The timeline of five weeks for instruction was limited compared to the New York study.
5. The size of the student samples at some reading levels was 4 or less and therefore not a valid representation for a study. (Ref. Prof. W. Elley)
6. Every student and teacher is assumed to be present for the 25 pilot study days (an absentee list was not provided).

Conclusions

Due to the fact that only one or two students were assessed at the higher levels (Blue and above) it is difficult to make a conclusion at these levels. However, this evaluation demonstrates an overall positive improvement as an intervention program.

It shows that the Award program is successful in supporting students to learn to read in an interesting and effective way. There have been impressive gains in the students' ability to recognise sounds and to develop a greater knowledge of essential words. There was an overall improvement in comprehension of text.

Careful analyses and comparison of results from pre- to post-test clearly shows areas of learning that students have consolidated or improved, and areas that need to be revisited.

This intervention program was trialled over a short period of 5 weeks. There is every indication that if these students were given the opportunity to work with the Award program over a longer period, they would continue to make excellent progress.

Wendy Dorset

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